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3/8/2023

VAC MEETING MINUTES

Opening Ceremonies, Salute to the Colors, Opening Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance

- Colors presented by Delegate Hettich
- Opening prayer by Delegate Honeywell

Roll Call of Members

- Number of members present: 49

Special Guests

- Maggie Roche Office of State Representative Joyce Mason
- Devin Stieber LCSW, CADAC, ACSW Mental Health Dept. Local Recovery Coordinator, FHCC Lovell
- Phillip DeRuntz, Lake County Health Department
- John Slavin VFW Libertyville
- Andy Toth, Jr.
- Don Camp AML 717
- Dick Lee AML 145
- Wilson Jones
- Mary Jones
- Ken Sedin AML 659
- Bob Safranek

Approval of minutes of previous meeting-November 16, 2022

- Motion made by Delegate Schultz
- Seconded by Delegate Gabriel
- Motion to approve previous minutes passed

President Report

- Nomination of Executive Board Officers:
 - Delegate reports due in accordance with bi-laws and Public Act 102-302
 - Listing of current Executive Board members, trustees, and open positions
 - Nomination Trustee
 - Larry Klauser
 - Nomination for Sergeant at Arms
 - George Gandara
 - Bernard Voit- withdrawn
 - Motion to close nominations by Delegate Johnson
 - Seconded by Delegate Gallagher
 - Motion passed to close nominations

- Motion to vote today by Delegate Reid
- Seconded by Delegate Schultz
- Motion passed to vote today
 - Larry Klauser confirmed Trustee
 - George Gandara confirmed Sergeant at Arms

Public Comment

- Guest Announcement: Mental Health Recovery Coordinator Devin Stieber
 - FHCC is available for support
 - Stress of service, combat can re-wire pathways in the brain and cause stumbles in life
 - Goal is to help find peace, satisfaction, and joy to continue helping serve the community and the Veterans families
 - Virtual event May 9, 2023 @ 10:30 retired General guest speaker sharing personal journey and struggles with Mental Health
 - Question from Delegate Gandara regarding talking circles being returned to FHCC
 - Mission to start a Veterans Mental Health Advisory Council with purpose for feedback, comments, questions, concerns, that can be brought to leadership to improve MH processes and programs; any volunteers interested are welcome ideally people with lived experience with MH challenge, but not required
 - Talking circle will be discussed with Mental Health Clinical Director
 - Question from Delegate Voit regarding “Casey Wheelers” re-opening on Sunday’s
 - Hospital is still operating under Federal Covid Mitigation Procedures which has impacted many programs, new Mental Health Chaplains have been hired
- Guest: General Rigsby: No announcement
- Guest: Craig Warner: AML 1247 Vernon Hills, many successful fundraisers will be donating \$1000 to VAC
- Guest: Phil DeRuntz: Lake County Health Dept has grant through SAMSA to provide Mental Health First Aid to provide training here in Lake County. VAC MHFA instructors John Murray and Summer Padoan are available. There is a great need that is not being taken care of. The class maximum is 30 people and minimum of 5, today’s class that was scheduled to be held only had 4 enroll, and therefore, cancelled. The classes are free, paid for by the Federal Government
 - Response from President Konz & Superintendent Tangen: Executive Board attended the class and found great value. Reminder this has been the third attempt to hold the class and had to cancel due to poor sign up. Too many of us know someone that ended their life due to not having the Mental Health Support. If assistance signing up is needed, come to the office and VACLC staff will facilitate
 - Support from Guest Stieber: VA supports Lake County Health Department and MHFA is the most important first line of support. Invest in 8hr course

Superintendents Report

- Personnel and Policy Manual: copies have been distributed through email and today in-person Comments, suggestions, concerns have been noted
 - Who keeps employee performance information
 - Superintendent and Chief of Staff
 - Drug testing- section should include statements:
 - regarding confidentiality;
 - and if staff member leaves the organization and goes to a new employer, the drug testing information is kept private from the new employer

- Board approval for pay raises, who makes up the board
 - The commission
- Article V: “non-medical reasons could become medically eligible or ineligible for termination”, this is a “moving target” for certain conditions, may want to consider additional verbiage for clarification
 - Policies and Procedures are not etched in stone, changes can be made through the Commission body to propose and accept changes
- Tele-commuter agreement and health and safety recommendations; signed employee statement, is an “at-will employee” statement needed
 - Not needed because it is codified in the law that we are at-will employees
- Who is enforcing the Policy
 - Superintendent
- Board has “say-so” for decisions
 - If Superintendent makes a decision, there are appeal processes for the board to reconsider a decision
- Has Lake County Board reviewed the Policy and Procedure Manual
 - No, our internal attorney has reviewed, Lake County Board and States Attorney is not required to review as we are separate unit of Local Government

- Motion to table approval of Policies and Procedures until changes made Delegate Voit
- Seconded by Delegate Reid
- Motion to table approval passed

- Trailer bill (clarification to P.A. 102-1132): passed unanimously through both houses and signed by the Gov. of Illinois and effective immediately, Superintendent Tangen was present to testify
 - Attorney General can now come in and investigate, mediate, and take action against anybody in violation of the law this will save in litigation fees rather than VAC’s having to file their own lawsuits for violations
- Delegate Forms required annually January 1, 60 days is provided to have completed and returned in order to participate in voting. Forms will be sent annually to current assigned delegate and post commander
- Winter IACVAC Meeting Peoria February 1-3, 2023:
 - Training was conducted on the MVAA. State of IL is in process of creating seven new VAC’s. We have been stuck at 47 VAC’s for a long time
 - The VFW and AML have assisted in getting Cook County VAC board restructuring Superintendent is up and running and VSO’s will be coming. Other Counties include many counties below I-80
 - VFW IL has put together a color-coded map indicating counties that have functioning VAC’s, non-functioning VAC’s, and no VAC’s. There are large patches where there are VFW districts with no VAC’s
 - We are working with the State Level to assist in building the VAC’s throughout the State. Talks regarding possible Tri-County VAC in those circuits that have counties that don’t have the minimum requirements to build a VAC
 - Superintendent Tangen is current President of IACVAC and Chief of Staff Murray is the District Vice President
- NACVSO Conference Washington DC February 6-19, 2023:
 - John is also Illinois Delegate to NACVSO and Andrew is the Judge Advocate of NACVSO.
 - Three big pushes for Congress
 - 1) Richard Star Act to provide same retirement benefits to veterans who are medically retired as those who are fully retired

- 2) Hero's bonus provides additional 10% retirement benefits if served between 20-30yrs and received a Valor Award below the MOH, push is to correct the discrepancy so Veterans that served more than 30yrs and received a Valor Award are still eligible to receive the additional 10%
 - 3) CVSO Act primary priority to provide federal recognition to County Veteran Service Officers which gives the VA specific commands on providing access/assistance, and provides federal funding, grants, and Government recognition to CVSO's, \$250 million Act. CVSO Act passed out of the House last session and died in Senate
- New Office Space: we have outgrown current office, will be moving to temporary office in Gurnee no current move date but space will be large enough for up to 26 staff members
- Office space at FHCC will be regained on 2nd floor (main deck) Bldg. 135, will have 2 office spaces. Still waiting on VA to clear out and provide IT etc.
- Land Purchase Update: We have the funds now to buy the land, September VAC body voted on the site (Old Gurnee Crab Shack, and Old Gurnee Outback). Negotiations with Crab Shack have progressed and, currently on hold waiting negotiations with Outback. Phone conversation has been held with owner of Outback lot, our offer has been transmitted and now awaiting response, expecting to hear back mid-week
- VSO Administrative update: Budget last year approved hiring of VSO and 2 Admin Assistants, candidates have been found and offers accepted, start date March 20, 2023
- FY2024 Budget: County Board process is followed for submission due by 1st week of July. May meeting will have full proposed budget for FY2024, will be posted in agenda and on website for consideration
- Property Tax Legislative Concerns: after 8yrs the DIC widows/spouses that were previously not eligible for Property Tax Exemption due to the veteran not in receipt of the exemption prior to death, are now eligible for the exemption. The 100 % P&T veterans are also now able to not have to re-certify annually, following the initial exemption. The reason this has taken 8yrs to get legislation amended is because of challenges of the EAV vs. Market Value and proposals to change from EAV to Market Value. Some assessors, lead primarily by St. Claire Assessor "hate" the Disabled Veterans Exemption and often make untrue statements of school districts losing money due to the exemption, or statements regarding the character of discharge and eligibility of exemptions
 - House Bill 1239 has been proposed to provide grants to individual school districts that have a higher amount of veterans in-receipt of the property exemption to those schools. However, the way the property exemption works does not reduce the revenue to the County or school district, but rather the amount is distributed throughout the grid-square surrounding home. This is a concern for our Disabled Veterans. Witness slips are available
 - Senate Bill 1975 put forth a study to evaluate 6 various counties to investigate if there is a decrease in revenue, the study results are not even due until July
- Women's Tele-town Hall will be March 21, 2023 through TRICARE and VA
 - POC: Nicholas.sanches@va.gov
- Claims Status: We used to assist veterans anywhere (County/Country/State), with the signing of the PACT Act we have been scheduling for appointments 6-8 weeks out and have temporarily stopped taking clients outside of Lake County. We are still booked out currently until May. Please don't refer clients outside of Lake County to our office. If you have friends/colleagues we will refer them to their local County VAC, but we may not even be able to return calls within a relatively fast time. Utilize IACVAC website to find local VAC office. John will send out the IACVAC Governors report which lists all VAC's in the state with their contact information

- P-Tax letters: Please do not contact VAC office to do the letter, call the VA 1-800 number, or use ebenefits or va.gov account to generate your own letter to upload and apply for your P-tax exemption application most townships will assist with the application process

Superintendents Report Complete

- Motion to approve report made by Delegate Gandara
- Seconded by Delegate Gabriel
- Motion to approve Superintendents Report passed

Old Business

- None

New Business

- Prayer request for Lisbeth Risley, having surgery this afternoon at 1400 her husband Steve now in Condell ICU

Delegate Reports

Delegate Gallagher (Post 659 American Legion):

- Post 659 is judging the District Essay Contest

Delegate Rock (Lake County Council, Navy League of the U.S):

- Awarded 37 Lone Sailor statues to outstanding Sailors at Great Lakes on January 23, 2023
- Met with the Secretary of the Navy at the USO Great Lakes on February 6, 2023
- Next meeting is on Saturday March 25, 2023 at 0800, Goat Locker, Great Lakes
- April meeting will be held on Saturday, April 22, 2023 at 0800, Goat Locker, Great Lakes

Delegate Sundberg (Ron Hill Post, VFW 2245 Grayslake):

- Mike Magneta (Post Commander) is participating in an awards ceremony at St. Gilbert School
- We are participating in all Grayslake Farmer's Markets
- We do a 50/50 raffle participating in the Craft Beer Fest and various other community fests

Delegate Hettich (Antioch American Legion Post 748, Antioch VFW Post 4551, ROA, USAR IL Ambassador):

- I am providing all of you this press release and information paper on the Army Reserve Minuteman Scholarship 2023-2024 campaign

Delegate Klauser (Mundelein American Legion Post 867):

- On Friday, April 21, 2023 several members of the Post and their significant others will be attending the "Veterans Appreciation Dinner" at the Double Tree Hotel as guests of the City of Mundelein Police Department
- Members of the Post will provide American flags for deceased veterans at 3 cemeteries from May 23, 2023 to June 5, 2023 they are the Diamond Lake Cemetery, Ivanhoe Cemetery and the St. Mary's Cemetery in the Freemont Township area of Mundelein
- Members of the Post will be distributing poppies on May 26-27, 2023 at several locations in Mundelein
- As always, Post 867 will participate in this year's Memorial Day Parade followed by a brief ceremony at Memorial Park. Once at the park, this year's guest speaker will be Col. (ret.) Paul J. Hettich

- On Tuesday, June 13, 2023 the post (867) will host its 20th Annual Benefit Golf outing and Luncheon at Village Green Golf Course located at Winchester Road and Midlothian Road in Mundelein

Delegate DeRue (MOAA/MOWW):

- There will be live “Advocacy in Action” in D.C. in late April with 225 delegates from across the U.S. Two items: 1) BAH reinstated at 100% 2) Reverse Tricare Pharmacy Cuts- Number in network has dropped from 55,000 to 42,000 with another 7,000 expected to drop out
- Concern: CSB considering 2 concepts re: TFL to cut deficit. One is for an annual enrollment fee of \$575 per individual or \$1150 per family. The other is cost sharing where the veteran will cover the first \$850 and 50% of the next \$7650. This is not yet in legislation, but ...
- (MOAA local) Meeting on March 19, 2023 with Mitch Siegel from Catholic Charities. State Council Meeting March 18, 2023 at Cantigny
- (MOWW): Next meeting is May 21, 2023 and will include ROA, MOAA and MOWW. The speaker will be Sean Magee, Chief of Staff for the Chicago Bears. On February 12, 2023 MOWW presented awards to 3 Eagle Scouts, on being 91 years old

Delegate Schultz (Vernon Post 1247):

- \$1500 was donated in late 2022 to Operation Fetch that operates out of VFW Post 8741. This donation is to assist in covering operating expenses in their support of veterans in need
- \$2000 has been donated to Veteran relief efforts over the last month (Midwest Veterans Closet and VACLIC). Additional donations are planned in the near future to support local food banks
- Post 1247 is conducting a Monthly bingo event, held on the first Thursday of the month from October through May. These events are held at the Vernon Hills Golf Course beginning at 6:30 PM on the first Thursday of the month from October to April
- Post 1247 presented the colors at the final home football game at Vernon High’s High School for Military Appreciation night
- Post 1247 transported over 150 coats and winter apparel items, collected as part of the GLMV (Green Oaks, Libertyville, Mundelein and Vernon Hills Chamber of Commerce) Coat Drive, delivering the collected items to the Midwest Veterans Closet
- Post 1247 participated in/supported several Veterans Day observances (Hawthorn Middle School South and Wheeling AMVETS Post 66)
- Post 1247 in partnership with the Village of Vernon Hills is recruiting candidates for the 2023 Service Honors Program. This is the program where banners are created and hung throughout the Village honoring both Active duty and Veterans for their service
- Post 1247 is planning its 5th Annual Support the Heroes Golf Outing on August 26th, 2023. Proceeds are used to fund philanthropic efforts

Motion to Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn made by Delegate Voit
- Seconded by Delegate Gabriel
- Motion to adjourn passed

Next meeting will be held on May 17, 2023 at the American Legion Post , Gurnee